Visual arts, music and physical education on stage: A transdisciplinary theatre project with picture books

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Background

In Germany in primary schools all subjects are taught by classroom teachers even though the majority has not undergone formal training in every subject. Therefore, teachers tend to lack self-confidence in non-selected subjects, especially in teaching visual arts and music (Mills 1989, Holden & Button 2006).

Aim

In order to enhance confidence and self-efficacy in untrained subjects a teaching project was developed as an additional format of instruction within the framework of the regular curriculum. This project is characterized by a cross-curricular combination of learning contents from the fields of visual arts, music, and physical education. Picture books are used as a starting point. Based on the concept of elementary music theatre, the students develop and present a scenic play that includes elements from visual arts, music and physical education. The aim is to demonstrate how to combine these subjects in a meaningful way in order to increase confidence and self-efficacy in the subjects that have not been studied.

Research method

Five model seminars were conducted from October 2017 with a current N = 115 (81% female, 19% male) participants. A pre-test/post-test questionnaire was applied to evaluate the effects on self-efficacy. Additionally a qualitative evaluation was conducted by performing a content analysis of students’ written reflections.

Components of our project work

- Transdisciplinary learning
- Self-discovery learning
- Learning in heterogeneous skill groups
- Team teaching
- Theatre project
- Learning by doing

Shared skills in the field of visual arts, music and physical education

- Designing and presenting
- Communicating and cooperating
- Perceiving and analyzing

Results and conclusion

Prior results already show that on average the students feel more artistic, musical and sporty than at the beginning of the semester.

The students feel significantly better prepared to teach the arts and transdisciplinary projects.

Conclusion:

Our experience shows that motivation strongly influences the group dynamics. The seminar concept works according to the motto of ‘jess is more’. We fish for students’ strengths rather than their weaknesses. Our learners become creative themselves at all levels. Universities should provide programmes to strengthen the future non-specialist teachers in their non-selected subjects to give them the confidence to undertake an interdisciplinary project. Children are thus able to benefit from interdisciplinary lessons rather than isolated subjects in school.

References:


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